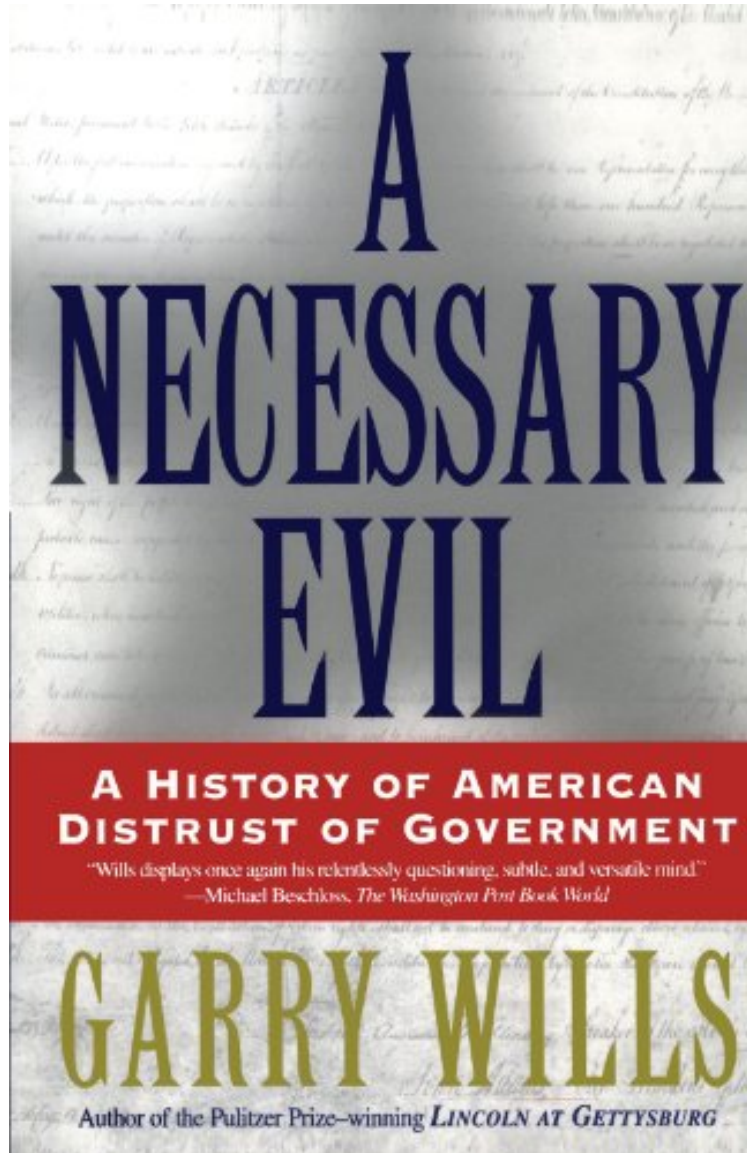


[Library ebook] A Necessary Evil: A History of American Distrust of Government

A Necessary Evil: A History of American Distrust of Government

Garry Wills

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#857572 in Books Simon n Schuster 2002-02-12 2002-02-12Original language:EnglishPDF # 1 8.44 x 1.00 x 5.50l, 1.04 #File Name: 0684870266368 pagesISBN13: 9780684870267Condition: NewNotes: BRAND NEW FROM PUBLISHER! 100% Satisfaction Guarantee. Tracking provided on most orders. Buy with Confidence! Millions of books sold! | File size: 66.Mb

Garry Wills : A Necessary Evil: A History of American Distrust of Government before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised A Necessary Evil: A History of American Distrust of Government:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Wills, noted classicist and former writer at The National ...By MartyWills, noted classicist and former writer at The National Review, debunks many common Anti-Federalist notions that have survived in popular American political and social culture. He analyzes these arguments in light of the intents of the Founders and the Federalists, citing primary sources and viable secondary research in defining terms, discerning intentions and explaining that the opposition to the Constitution still survives in popular but constitutionally unfounded Right-Wing lore. Willis uses his classical education, experience as a political writer and judicious use of historical methodologies to provide a clearer understanding of both the Founding and of the constitutionally defined role of government. Moreover, this is a clear and simple read that should be accessible to everyone.2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. When did it become a bad idea to read something that challenges one's preconceptionsBy Sam SpadeWhen did it become a bad idea to read something that challenges one's preconceptions? While one may not necessarily agree with all this book's conclusions, there is no doubt its arguments are well-researched and logical. A few points off for this book's citation of "Arming America: The Origins of a National Gun Culture" by Michael A. Bellesiles before proven fraudulent.0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five StarsBy Duffy 5319great

In *A Necessary Evil*, Pulitzer Prize-winning author Garry Wills shows that distrust of government is embedded deep in the American psyche. From the revolt of the colonies against king and parliament to present-day tax revolts, militia movements, and debates about term limits, Wills shows that American antigovernment sentiment is based on a fundamental misunderstanding of our history. By debunking some of our fondest myths about the Founding Fathers, the Constitution, and the taming of the frontier, Wills shows us how our tendency to hold our elected government in disdain is misguided.

.com Nothing may be more American than distrust of government, but Garry Wills says there is something deeply wrong with this tradition. "It is a tradition that belittles America," he writes, "that asks us to love our country by hating our government, that turns our founding fathers into unfounders, that glamorizes frontier settlers in order to demean what they settled, that obliges us to despise the very people we vote for." Although *A Necessary Evil* is full of historical references, it is plainly motivated by contemporary politics: "I began this book in 1994, when the fear of government manifested itself in the off-year election of a Republican majority to Congress." Wills writes at length about matters such as the republic's founding, the 19th-century debate over states' rights, and so on. Yet the most passionate and engaging sections focus on antigovernment attitudes today, as embodied by the term-limits movement (the founders, he says, never were opposed to professional politicians), the National Rifle Association (whose defense of gun-ownership rights, Wills believes, is ahistorical), and abortion-clinic bombings (which Wills unpersuasively blames on Ronald Reagan). In his conclusion, Wills argues that government is in fact "a necessary good." It may do things poorly from time to time, and it may even do great harm. "But," to draw a parallel, "when marriages fail, we do not think it is because marriage is an evil in itself." *A Necessary Evil* is an erudite treatment of an important subject. -- John J. MillerFrom Publishers WeeklyIn a masterful extended essay, Wills, an accomplished analyst of the American political psyche (and winner of a 1993 Pulitzer Prize for *Lincoln at Gettysburg*), explores, in all its guises, the great American distrust of government. Antigovernment sentiment is owned by neither the left nor the right, Wills explains: in the 1960s, for example, radicals adopted anti-government values, and Southern conservatives, though steeped in the tradition of states' rights, switched gears to affirm the authority of the federal government to wiretap, arrest and otherwise harass the radicals. The debate over the proper size and reach of the federal government is a moving target, but Wills hits it bulls-eye in chapter after chapter, whether he's debunking the mythology that has grown up around the militias that fought in the Revolutionary War (he argues that the Continental Army played a much more vital role) or clarifying the principles that undergird the separation of powers. He conceived of this book in reaction to the 1994 congressional election, feeling that the Republican Party's *Contract With America* embodied not a healthy wariness of power but a calcified, and dangerous, antigovernmentalism. Americans, Wills argues, need to stop "demanding from government qualities that should be sought, primarily, in other aspects of our social life." He asks readers to value the federal government for the things it can provide, from the quotidian (the highway system) to the majestic (equal protection under the law). Ultimately, his book is an eloquent plea for the maturity that would enable Americans, after more than 200 years, to view government as "a necessary good." (Oct.) Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc.From Library JournalSmall may be beautiful in the eyes of most conservatives and all libertarians, but it surely isn't in the view of Pulitzer Prize winner Wills. A prolific author (with 20 previous books to his credit, including *Lincoln at Gettysburg*), he here dissects the similar arguments used by antigovernment rightists and leftists, exposing the common myths behind many of their beliefs. Their arguments crumble under the facts and logic Wills presents. He lays out an important distinction between hatred for and violent resistance to legitimate government (e.g., Daniel Shays, Timothy McVeigh, etc.) and civil disobedience regarding laws that are unjust, and he explores the role of the federal government. As a result, this is a most relevant, timely, and needed work that should take its place beside Richard Hofstadter's classic *The Paranoid Style in American Politics*. Highly recommended for all libraries.-AWilliam

